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NEGATIVE BURN

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64 PAGE ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

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ISSUE 13

NEGATIVE BURN

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Joe Pruett ~ Editor

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STRANGERS IN PARADISE.....Page 1
written and illustrated by Terry Moore

MR. MAMOULIAN.....Page 6
written and illustrated by Brian Bolland

ALAN MOORE'S SONGBOOK.....Page 7
written by Alan Moore
illustrated by Neil Gaiman

KILROY IS HERE.....Page 14
written by Joe Pruett
illustrated by Marc Erickson

MILK AND CHEESE.....Page 22
written and illustrated by Evan Dorkin

TWILIGHT PEOPLE.....Page 24
written and illustrated by Mark Ricketts

TRIUMPH OF HUNGER.....Page 34
written and illustrated by Paul Pope

CLASSICS DESECRATED.....Page 40
written by Doug Wheeler
illustrated by Stan Shaw

THE REAL THING.....Page 42
written and illustrated by Brian Michael Bendis

THE CALCULUS TEST.....Page 49
written by Edward Martin III
illustrated by Casey Jones
inked by Craig Gilmore and Jeff Parker

THE BODY SNATCHERS.....Page 52
written by Kyle Garrett
illustrated by Nathan Pride

THE ASTUTE CRITIC.....Page 57
written and illustrated by Phillip Hester

DOMINIQUE.....Page 58
script/story by Charles and Lisa Moore
art/story by Gene Gonzales

SKETCHBOOK.....Page 62
illustrated by Tony Harris

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STRANGERS IN PARADISE™ presents "SWEET DREAMS!"

by TERRY MOORE

HURRY DARLING BEFORE YOU'RE DRENCHED!
HA! TOO LATE! I WAS SOAKED LONG BEFORE YOU CAME AND GOT ME!
BUT DARLING... WHY DID YOU STAND OUT IN THE RAIN WAITING FOR ME? YOU COULD'VE WAITED IN THE CAR, EVEN WITH A DEAD BATTERY!
WELL, I DIDN'T WANT YOU WORRIED ABOUT FINDING ME, HONEY! I MEAN, YOU WERE ALREADY SO KIND TO COME GET ME!
AFTER ALL, I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU WANTED TO WATCH THE GAME ON TV!
OH NONSENSE! NOTHING MATTERS BUT YOU, SWEETPEA!
HERE SWEETHEART, YOU SIT AND RELAX. I'LL PUT ON YOUR FAVORITE BASIA CD AND LOAD YOUR PIPE!
OH NOW REALLY DARLING, YOU DON'T HAVE TO...
THEN I'LL COOK YOUR FAVORITE MEAL AND MASSAGE YOUR FEET WHILE YOU WATCH THE PLAYBOY CHANNEL!
I DON'T DESERVE YOU FRANCINE! YOU'RE ONE OF A KIND!
≒ SIGH ≒
I KNOW.
SO, DID YOU WANNA DANCE FIRST OR JUST DROP AND DO IT RIGHT HERE IN THE MALL?
HUH?
SALE!

JUST KIDDING, OF COURSE! ... I CAN WAIT TIL WE GET TO THE CAR!
...THAT WAS A JOKE, EINSTEIN!
OH GOSH, I'M SORRY KATCHOO, I GUESS I WAS DAYDREAMING. DID YOU SEE THAT GUY OVER BY THE HABERDASHERY?
SALE!
DRUGS
SIGH
NO.
OVER THERE, THAT INCREDIBLE HUNK IN THE TWEED SPORTS COAT!
ZING!
I DON'T SEE ANY HUNKS IN TWEED COATS!
BUT HE'S RIGHT THERE! STANDING NEXT TO THE WOMAN WITH THE BAD HENNA JOB AND TACKY TIGER STIRRUP PANTS!
I SEE A SLIMY WARD CLEAVER REJECT AND THE POSTER CHILD FOR PRO-CHOICE!
SIGH ... ISN'T HE WONDERFUL?
SALE
HE'S AN ASS! A COMPLETE AND TOTAL GRADE A ASS!

CRAK!
RUMBLE!
BUTWEIDER BEER!
BEST BEER BELLIES
HEH! HEH! HEH! HEH!
HEH! HEH! HEH! HEH! HEH!
HEH! HEH! HEH! HEH!
HEH! HEH! HEH! HEH! HEH!
HEH! HEH!
HEH!
BURP!
STOMP!
STOMP!
STOMP!
STOM
STO
ST
UH OH.
SNARL!
SLAM!
Hiii HONEY!
I DON'T MEAN TO BE RUDE, BUT YOU REALLY OUGHTA USE AN ANTI-PERSPIRANT!
PUFF!
PUFF!
PUFF!
PUFF!
PUFF!
PUFF!
PUFF!
PUFF!
PUFF!
PUFF!
PUFF!
PUFF!
I JUST WALKED 15 BLOCKS IN A RAGING HURRICANE YOU ASS!! WHY DIDN'T YOU COME GET ME?!!

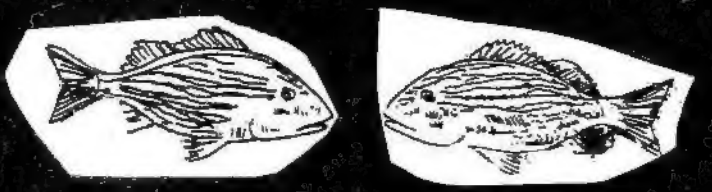
WELL, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH PUMPKIN... UH, I HAD JUST LOADED MY PIPE WHEN YOU CALLED AND... WELL YOU KNOW HOW I LOVE A GOOD SMOKE! HEH! HEH!
YOU MEAN TO TELL ME YOU MADE ME WALK HOME IN THE DRIVING RAIN SO YOU COULD SIT ON YOUR BUTT AND SUCK A PIPE?!
GEE WHIZ HON! YOU MAKE IT SOUND SO ... SELFISH!
YEAH? AND WHAT WOULD YOU CALL IT?
MMM....BUSY?
YOU PIG!! YOU BRAINLESS POMPOUS EGOTISTICAL PIG!
ACK!
IF YOU'RE GONNA ACT LIKE A PIG THEN I WANT YOU TO SQUEAL LIKE ONE!
N-NOW SWEETPEA, D-DON'T BE RASH!
DON'T SWEETPEA ME YOU SON-OF-A-BITCH! SQUEAL!!!
OOWW! SQUEEE! SQUEEE!

KATCHOO? ... UH, KATCHOO? DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID?
SQUEAL YOU PIG! SQUEAL!
KATCHOO?
HUH? OH! UH, SORRY. WHAT DID YOU SAY?
SALE
SHIRTS .5% OFF WOW! YA
I WAS JUST ASKING IF YOU WERE READY FOR LUNCH... I'M HUNGRY.
OH. UH... SURE.
SO... WHERE DO YOU WANNA GO?
PIZZA?
I DON'T CARE.
OK.
WAIT A MINUTE... I THOUGHT YOU SAID PIZZA WASN'T ON YOUR DIET.
I KNOW.
BUT THERE'S THIS REALLY CUTE GUY WORKING THERE NOW!
!
EXCEPT I THINK HE MIGHT BE ONLY 15! I CAN'T REALLY TELL, MAYBE IF YOU SEE HIM YOU COULD TELL, HUH? COME TO THINK OF IT, I HAVEN'T HEARD HIM TALK!.. HMMM.. WHAT IF HE SOUNDS LIKE MICKEY MOUSE!
ALL BRAS FREE! WITH PURCHASE OF APPLIANCE
WARD... HOW ABOUT THIS ONE, DARLING? ... WARD? ... HONEY? ... WARD?! ... HEY BUTT-FACE!
FIN

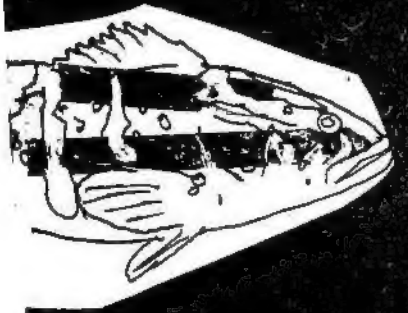
MR. MAMOULIAN

BACON

16 BOLLAND 25·11 87



THE MURDERS ON THE RUE MORGUE



A SONG BY ALAN MOORE

ILLUSTRATED BY NEIL GAIMAN
LETTERED BY SUZANNE MEKEEL

DOWN ON RUE MORGUE TONIGHT, THE GREAT WHITE APES ARE DANCING.
AT EVENING STREET CAFES THE WAITERS TOAST THE MOON.

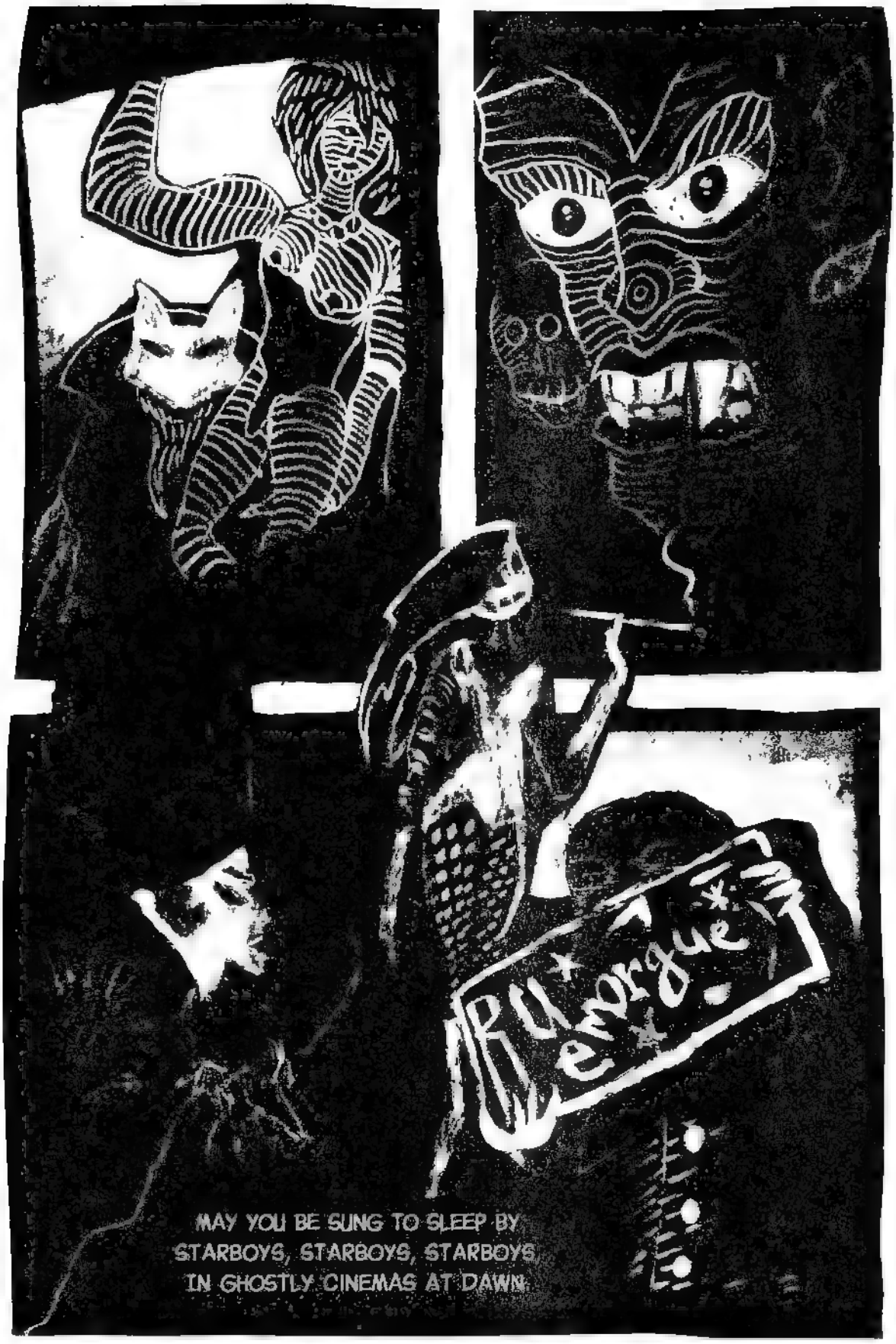
AND ME IN DRACULOVE,
ALONE IN MIDNIGHT BALLROOMS
THE TABLE-LAMPS BURN SLOWLY,
SUCH A LONELY SHADE
OF BLUE.

WE WATCHED
THE VAMPIRES GLIDE
THROUGH TWILIGHT
URCHIN-GARDENS.

YOU BLOW A
KISS;
THEY SMILE
AND MELT IN
THE DARK.

LATER ON WE OPENED
ALL THE CAGES AT THE AVIARY.

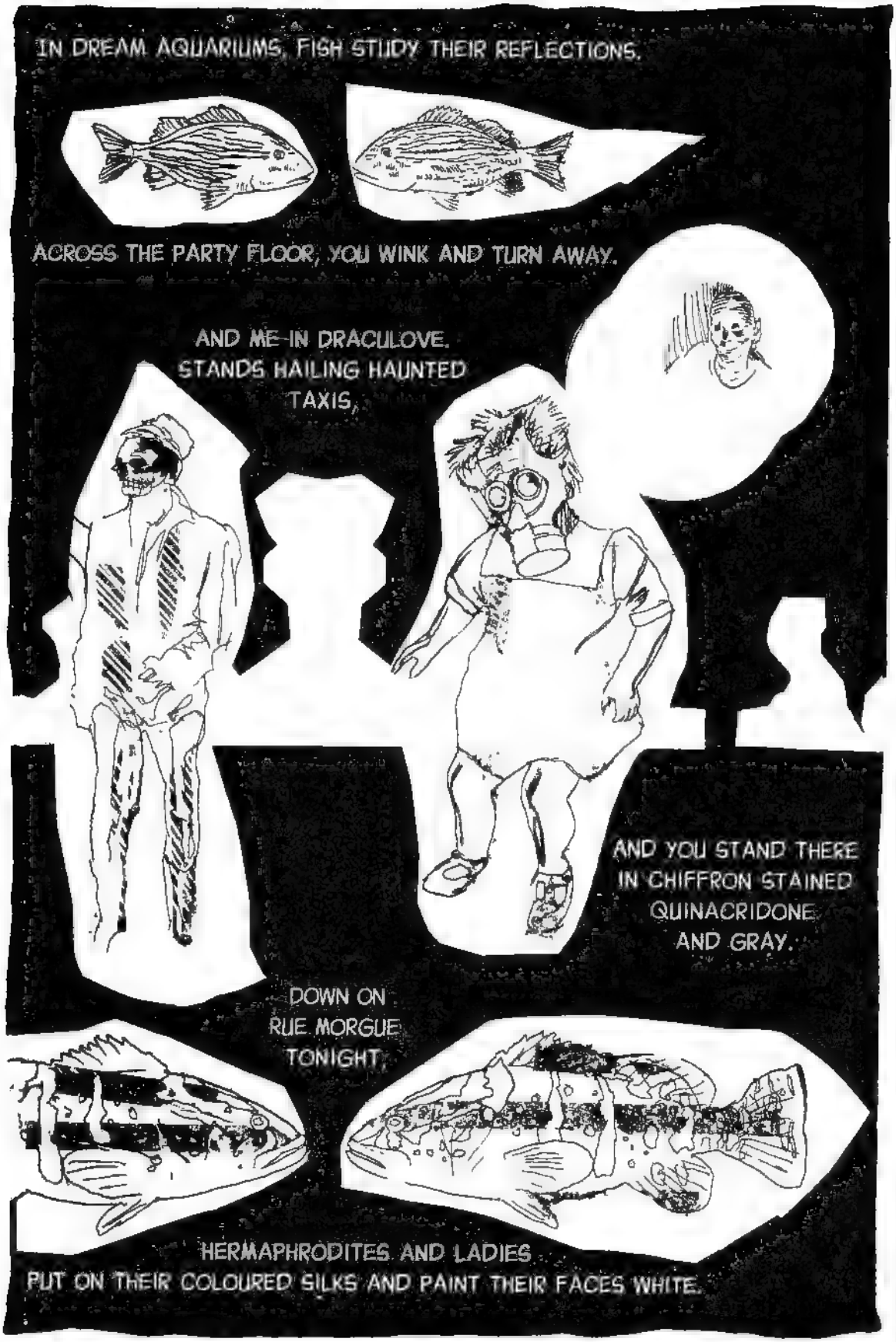
A CLOUD OF DOVES BLOW LIKE ALBINO LEAVES ACROSS THE PARK.


Rue Morgue
MAY YOU BE SUNG TO SLEEP BY
STARBOYS, STARBOYS, STARBOYS
IN GHOSTLY CINEMAS AT DAWN.

MAY WHITE FLAMINGOES
FILL YOUR NIGHTMARES.

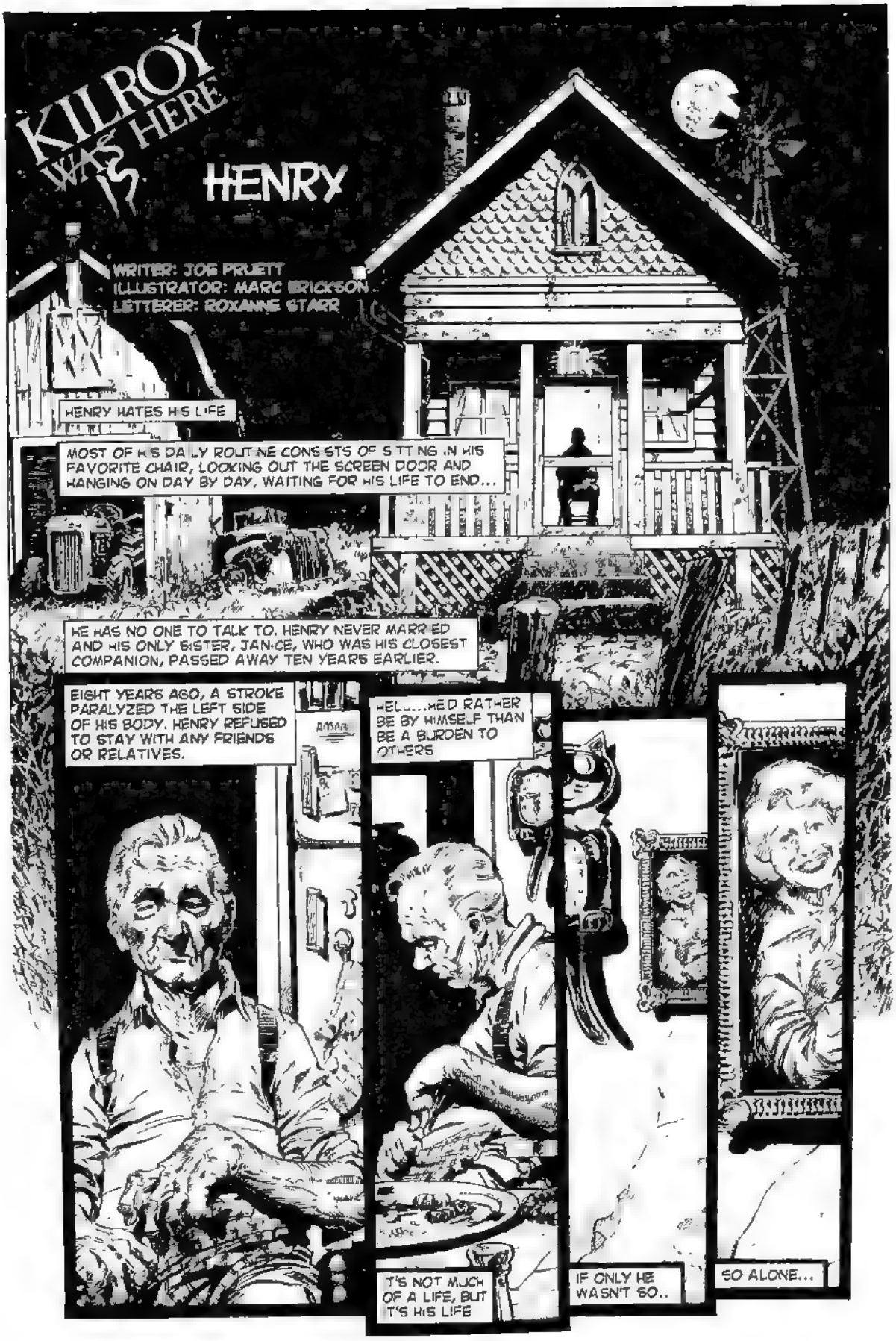
WHEN EVENING COMES TO THE FLAMINGOES' LAKE-SIDE HOME

I LEAVE A GLOVE,
AND I AM GONE.


IN DREAM AQUARIUMS, FISH STUDY THEIR REFLECTIONS.
ACROSS THE PARTY FLOOR, YOU WINK AND TURN AWAY.
AND ME-IN DRACULOVE.
STANDS HAILING HAUNTED
TAXIS,
AND YOU STAND THERE
IN CHIFFRON STAINED
QUINACRIDONE
AND GRAY.
DOWN ON
RUE MORGUE
TONIGHT.
HERMAPHRODITES AND LADIES
PUT ON THEIR COLOURED SILKS AND PAINT THEIR FACES WHITE.

AND MURDERERS CLAP AS YOU DESCEND THE EMPIRE STAIRCASE.
THE DOG-MEN GRIN AND BARE THEIR YELLOW TEETH, AS IF TO BITE. A THROAT SO PALE IT LEAVES ME SNOWBLIND, SNOWBLIND, SNOWBLIND.
A VOICE LIKE DISTANT SATELLITES.

WE MAKE LOVE TO EACH OTHER'S SHADOWS. GOD KNOWS THE BEST SUN SHINES AT NIGHT.
I'VE HELPED YOU FROM YOUR BED AT SUNSET, SUNSET, SUNSET. I'VE HELPED YOU PAINT YOUR WINDOWS BLACK.
I'VE BEEN DOWN UPON RUE MORGUE SO LONG, MON AMOUR MORT, DON'T THINK I'M EVER GOING BACK.


KILROY WAS HERE
HENRY
WRITER: JOE PRUETT
ILLUSTRATOR: MARC BRICKSON
LETTERER: ROXANNE STARR
HENRY HATES HIS LIFE
MOST OF HIS DAILY ROUTINE CONSISTS OF SITTING IN HIS FAVORITE CHAIR, LOOKING OUT THE SCREEN DOOR AND HANGING ON DAY BY DAY, WAITING FOR HIS LIFE TO END...
HE HAS NO ONE TO TALK TO. HENRY NEVER MARRIED AND HIS ONLY SISTER, JANICE, WHO WAS HIS CLOSEST COMPANION, PASSED AWAY TEN YEARS EARLIER.
EIGHT YEARS AGO, A STROKE PARALYZED THE LEFT SIDE OF HIS BODY. HENRY REFUSED TO STAY WITH ANY FRIENDS OR RELATIVES.
HELL...HE'D RATHER BE BY HIMSELF THAN BE A BURDEN TO OTHERS
IT'S NOT MUCH OF A LIFE, BUT IT'S HIS LIFE
IF ONLY HE WASN'T SO..
SO ALONE...

7:58 PM
"... AND WE'LL SEE YOU NEXT TIME ON THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE."
CLICK

BRINGGGG
BRINGGG
BRINGGG
BRINGGGGGG
BRINGGGGGG
HELLO.
WHAT? YOU'LL ONLY HAVE A FEW MINUTES TO SAY HELLO. YES, I UNDERSTAND. YOU'LL BE IN A RUSH. NO. THAT'S FINE. SEE YOU THEN.
JED. IT'S GOOD TO HEAR FROM YOU... ANYONE ACTUALLY. WHAT'S THAT? YOU MAY BE STOPPING BY TO VISIT FOR A WHILE NEXT THURSDAY. YOU MUST STAY THE NIGHT. I'VE GOT THE EXTRA ROOM CLEAN. YOU'LL BE NO TROUBLE AT ALL.

9: 36 PM
CREEEEK
WHO... WHO'S THERE?
RELAX, GRANDPA. NOBODY WANTS TO HURT YOU.
I JUST NEED YOU TO TELL ME WHERE YOU KEEP YOUR MONEY, AND I'LL BE ON MY WAY.
NO WAY, GRANDPA!
SLAM

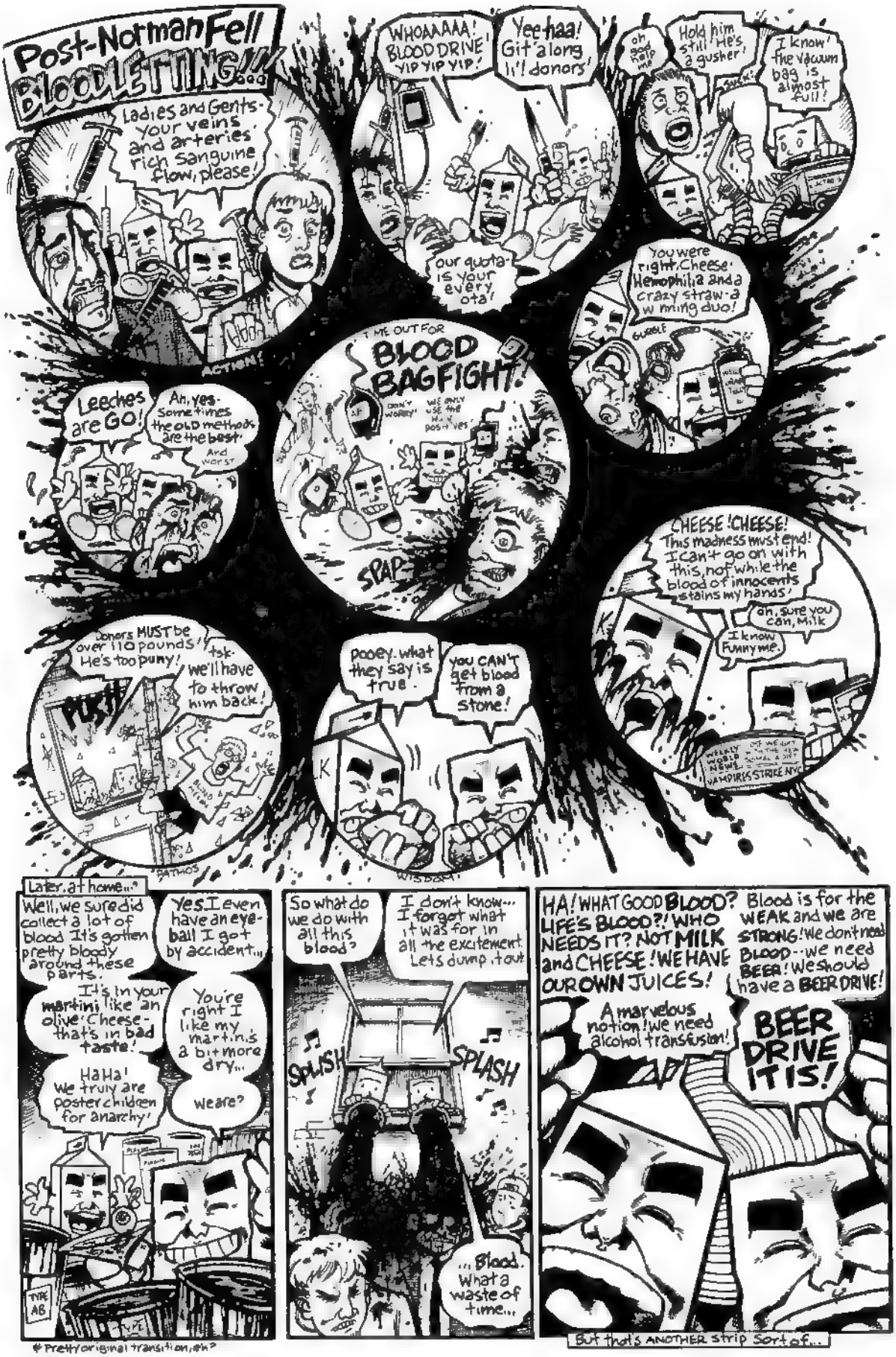
WHATCHA GOIN' FOR?
NOT TOO SMART, ARE YOU?
NOT BAD. NOT BAD AT ALL.
I SHOULD JUST BLOW YOU AWAY RIGHT NOW?...WHO IN THE HELL WOULD MISS YOU, ANYWAY? YOU AIN'T GOT NO FAMILY. HELL, YOU AIN'T GOT NO FRIENDS!
I KNOW, MAN. I'VE BEEN WATCHIN' THIS PLACE FOR AWHILE. I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU EVEN GO ON LIVIN'.
NO, PLEASE...
NOW, WHERE'S THE MONEY?

I ASKED YOU A QUESTION, OLD MAN!!
WHERE'S...
THE...
NO MORE.
MONEY!!!!!

WHY IS IT THAT THE ELDERLY AND THE YOUNG ARE MOST OFTEN THE TARGET OF MISGUIDED ANGER AND VIOLENCE?
IS IT BECAUSE THE HELPLESS AND WEAK CANNOT FIGHT BACK? IS THIS WHAT INCITES THE OUTRAGE? THE POWER OF HOLDING THE LIFE OF AN INVALID OR AN INNOCENT IN YOUR HANDS?
SCREW YOU!
I HAVE NO PATIENCE WITH VULGAR CREATURES LIKE YOU.

STOP. PLEASE.
CAREFUL. SAVE YOUR STRENGTH.
WHO... WHO ARE YOU?
KILROY... A FRIEND.
A FRIEND? I HAVEN'T HAD A FRIEND IN SO LONG.
REST IN PEACE, HENRY. YOU ARE FRIENDLESS NO LONGER.
THE END

PLEASE GIVE!
MILK AND CHEESE
GIVE 'til it HURTS!
DAIRY PRODUCTS-GONE REALLY BAD, in~
© evan dorkin 94
BLOOD DRIVE!
THREE'S COMPANY! We're watching Three's Company!
When we watch our Three's Company it fills our hearts with joy 'It lifts our spirits'
WE MUST BOUNCE!
Comedy Central's Three's Company marathon w/ Commercial interruptions
We don't want MESSAGES! We want Three's Company!
Hello, I'm Cityteam Services director Martha Hall... We are currently experiencing a major blood shortage Blood donations are down and there is a desperate need for blood---
Ahhh--the message is BLOOD!
Turn the television OFF! It's message is crystal clear- the television needs BLOOD! We must provide blood for our thirsty cathode mother!
The TELEVISION CRAVES BLOOD! Who are we to question the logic in this? We have our HOLY MISSION 'THIS IS OUR JIHAD-DU-JOUR!
GIN
But first...
...the vital closing moments of Three's Company
So, Jack- are you really a faggot?
Goshdarn YES, Mr. Roper!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
Okay, then. You can stay. Just stay the hell away from me, you queer!
BLOOD DRIVE! GET IN LINE!
SPASH
Citizens! Your finest BLOOD, please.
NORMAN FELL commands it!!!
WE'RE on a MISSION from MR. ROPER!


Post-Notman Fell
BLOODLETTING!!
Ladies and Gents- your veins and arteries rich sanguine flow, please!
ACTION!
WHOAAAAA! BLOOD DRIVE! YIP YIP YIP!
Yeehaa! Git'along li'l donors!
our quota is your every pint!
oh good help me
Hold him still! He's a gusher!
I know! the vacuum bag is almost full!
You were right, Cheese. Hemophilia and a crazy straw-a winning duo!
Leeches are GO!
Ah, yes. Sometimes the OLD methods are the best!
And worst.
TIME OUT FOR
BLOOD BAGFIGHT!
DON'T WORRY!
WE ONLY USE THE MILK POSITIVES
SPAP
CHEESE! CHEESE! This madness must end! I can't go on with this, not while the blood of innocents stains my hands!
oh, sure you can, Milk
I know! Funny me.
WEEKLY WORLD NEWS
VAMPIRES STRIKE NYC
Donors MUST be over 110 pounds! He's too puny!
tsk. we'll have to throw him back!
PUSH
BATHOS
pooey. what they say is true.
you CAN'T get blood from a stone!
WISDOM
Later, at home...*
Well, we sure did collect a lot of blood. It's gotten pretty bloody around these parts.
Yes. I even have an eyeball I got by accident...
It's in your martini like an olive. Cheese- that's in bad taste!
You're right. I like my martinis a bit more dry...
Ha Ha! We truly are poster children for anarchy!
we are?
TYPE AB
So what do we do with all this blood?
I don't know... I forget what it was for in all the excitement. Lets dump it out
SPLISH
SPLASH
...Blood. What a waste of time...
HA! WHAT GOOD BLOOD? LIFE'S BLOOD?! WHO NEEDS IT? NOT MILK and CHEESE! WE HAVE OUR OWN JUICES!
A marvelous notion! We need alcohol transfusion!
Blood is for the WEAK and we are STRONG! We don't need BLOOD-- we need BEER! We should have a BEER DRIVE!
BEER DRIVE IT IS!
But that's ANOTHER strip sort of...
* Pretty original transition, eh?

Lucifer was a **beautiful** baby boy.

He had **wings**. White wings.

His face had the quality of a gauzed photo. It was **mysterious** and **ethereal**.

His voice was simultaneous **laughter** and **singing**. The **sounds** he made weren't words, but I instinctively, or as if through some kind of hypnotic influence, **understood** his needs.

I took him from the **primordial ooze** that once was my dear friend **Maxine** and began licking this jelly-like stuff that **covered** his body and wings. It didn't make me **puke**. I was **compelled** to do it, like a mother cat cleaning afterbirth from a newly born kitten.

As I held him, inhaling each **sweet** breath he exhaled, he **reached out** to Corey, who was beside me. Corey was understandably in a state of shock after seeing Maxine turn into some kinda flesh **cocoon**, but he held his hand out for Lucifer to **grab**. Lucifer **took** it, **holding** on tightly with his perfect little **pink** fingers. Corey **smiled**, said the words, "**This is so cool!**" and then just disappeared.

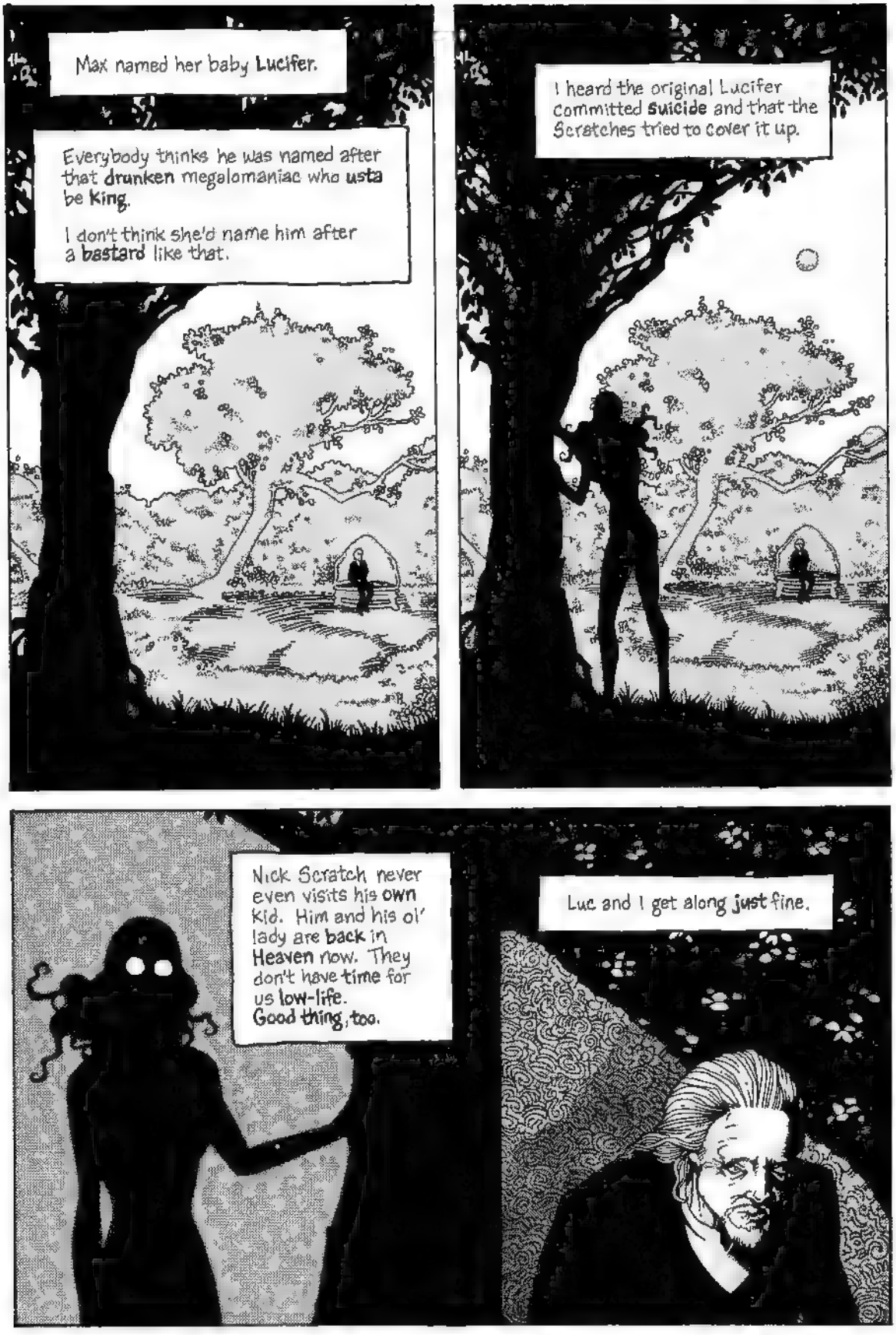
All that time in Catholic school hearin' about these enraptured guys an' their **epiphanies** an' here I was all **euphoric** like that. I felt like I could break into song, like I was in some kinda **corny musical** or something. I was so knocked out I didn't even realize that there were others in the room. It was gettin' to be like some **holy rollin' revival** with me an' my **goofy grin** an' the others **cryin'** an' all **jazzed up** and everything.

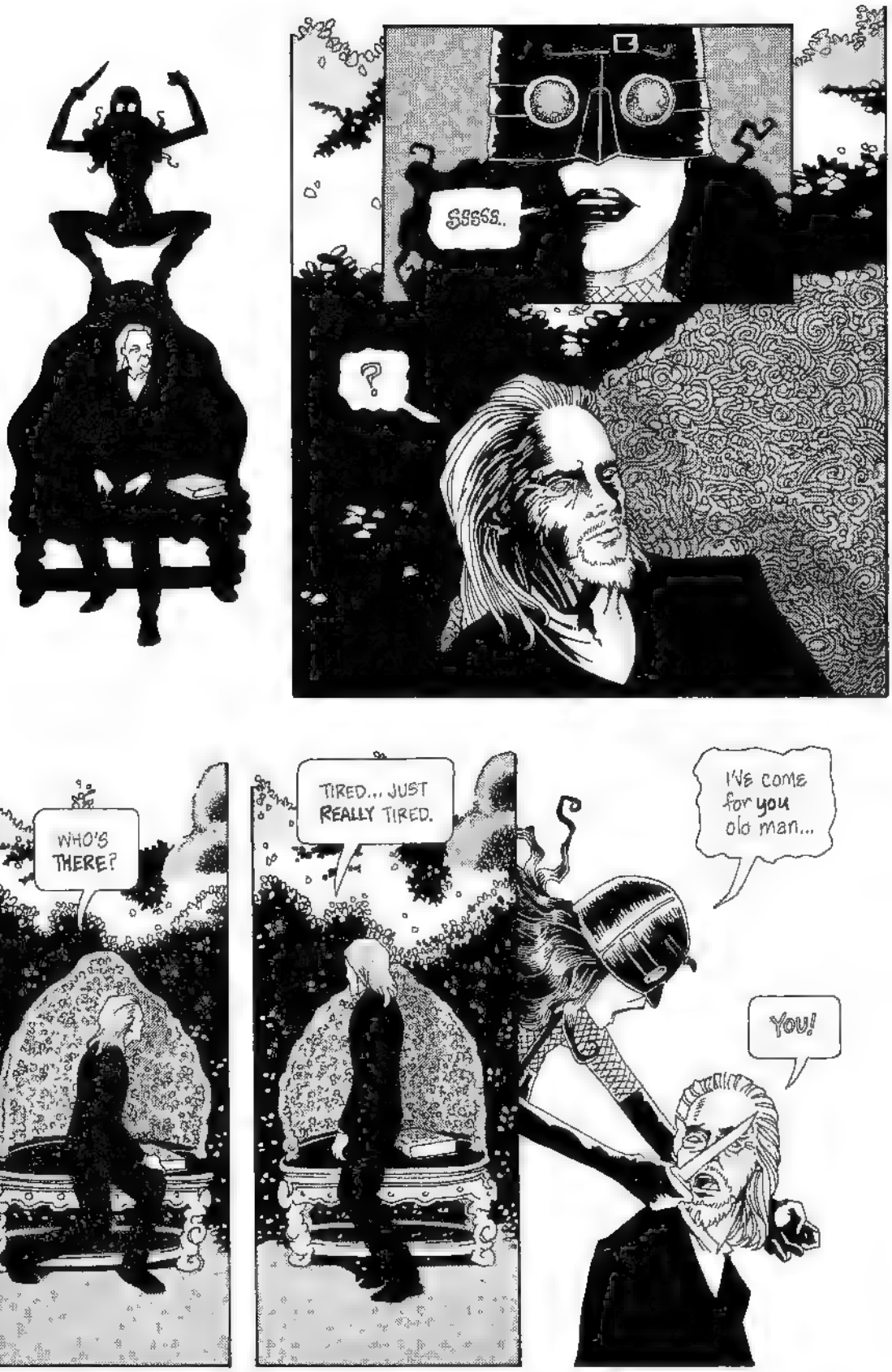
Before I knew it, Diedre and Nicholas Scratch were **reaching out** for Luc's hand, **just** like Corey did, and even though **deep** in my mind I was worried that they might take him from my arms, I wasn't in **control** of my body anymore. **Luc**,... even though he was this sweet, innocent little baby,.. **he** was at the wheel and he **coulda** driven us all into **oblivion**, but **we** didn't care!

Before I knew it the Scratches, with just a **touch** of Luc's little **hand**, started to **grow** the most magnificent freakin' **wings**! Their clothes just **fell** around them as they **lifted** up into the air... rising **higher** and **higher** until I couldn't see them anymore.

Poor Max.
She gave birth to the greatest kid in the multiverse...
Everybody's complaining about being green.
People want to go back to their own skin color.
...and she never even got the chance to see his face.
SO YOU'RE SAYIN' WE'RE NOT ONE BIG HAPPY GREEN FAMILY THEN?

I diapered the kid, taught him to drive and tried to give him a sense of family and.. damnit, he's a good kid.
You'd think the angels would come down and take the boy away. After all, they forgave all the original rebels.
I guess they just don't want some half-breed screwing up the real estate value in Heaven.
The sons and daughters of the Eucharist are spitting venom!
Damn, I'm tired... and I'm sick of the pretentious, self-righteous angels. I'm sick of demons, half in the bag, playin' around with supernatural nonsense. Most of all, I'm sick of my own kind.. ...'cos they haven't got a clue.
RUN ALONG, NABO. I NEED TO REST HERE IN THE GARDEN...
..DREAM ABOUT THE OLD DAYS...
...SIMPLER TIMES.
My opinion...
...demons, mortals, angels.. they don't belong together... and green flesh is...
...nauseating!
Luc thinks they're all worth savin', but they just wear me out.


Max named her baby **Lucifer.**
Everybody thinks he was named after that **drunken** megalomaniac who **usta** be **King.**
I don't think she'd name him after a **bastard** like that.
I heard the original Lucifer committed **suicide** and that the Scratches tried to cover it up.
Nick Scratch never even visits his **own** kid. Him and his ol' lady are **back** in **Heaven** now. They don't have **time** for us **low-life.** **Good thing, too.**
Luc and I get along **just** fine.

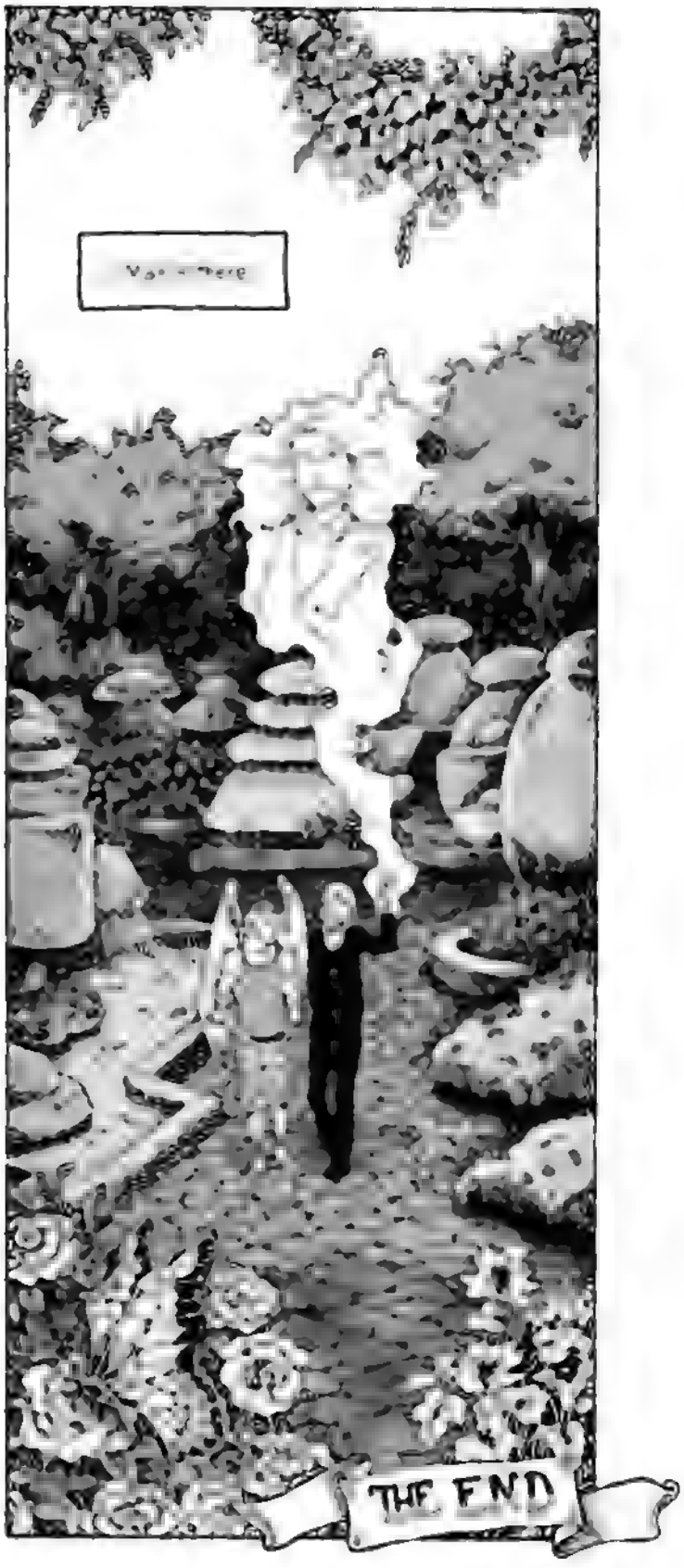

SSSSS..
?
WHO'S THERE?
TIRED... JUST REALLY TIRED.
I've come for you old man...
YOU!

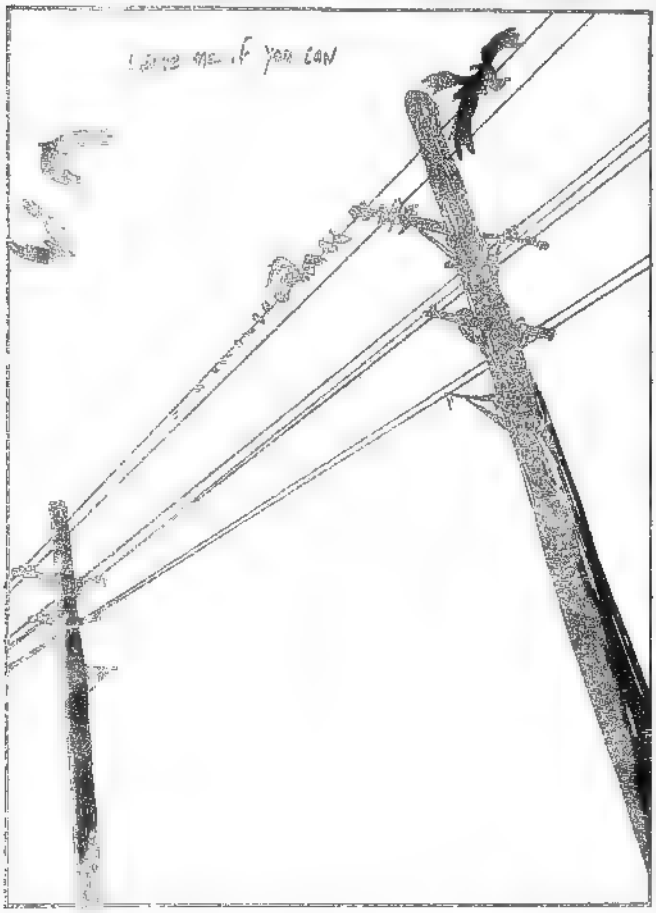
...and I come bearing the same WEAPON used to destroy Beelzebub!
Do you have any last words before I...
YEAH. SHUT UP AND GET ON WITH IT!
FIGHT BACK!
UUHH...
What is...
...trick?
DO IT!
..this..

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
Wuzzup
Grrrr...

LUC.
Uncle Frank, What have you done to yourself?
NOTHIN' KID...
... JUST THINKIN' 'BOUT THE WAY THINGS WERE,
...
... HOW THINGS MIGHT HAVE TURNED OUT DIFFERENT. THAT'S ALL.

I need guidance Uncle Frank. My popularity is slipping in the polls.
HMMM...
Maybe I should just let things be as they were.
Every time I look into Luc's eyes...
...I see Max.
Every time that kid does something selfless..
FORGET IT, KID, IT'LL ALL BLOW OVER ONCE YOU PURIFY THE EARTH AND REBUILD THE ECOLOGY TO FULL EDEN POTENTIAL.
WHEN THOSE JOKERS GET A WHIFF OF PROPER OXYGEN, THEY'LL START SEEIN' THINGS A LOT CLEARER
I suppose...


THE END



The Triumph of Hunger
1/6
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The Triumph of Hunger
4313 Panel Page 3/6

The Triumph of Hunger
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3/16

The Triumph of Hunger
4/6
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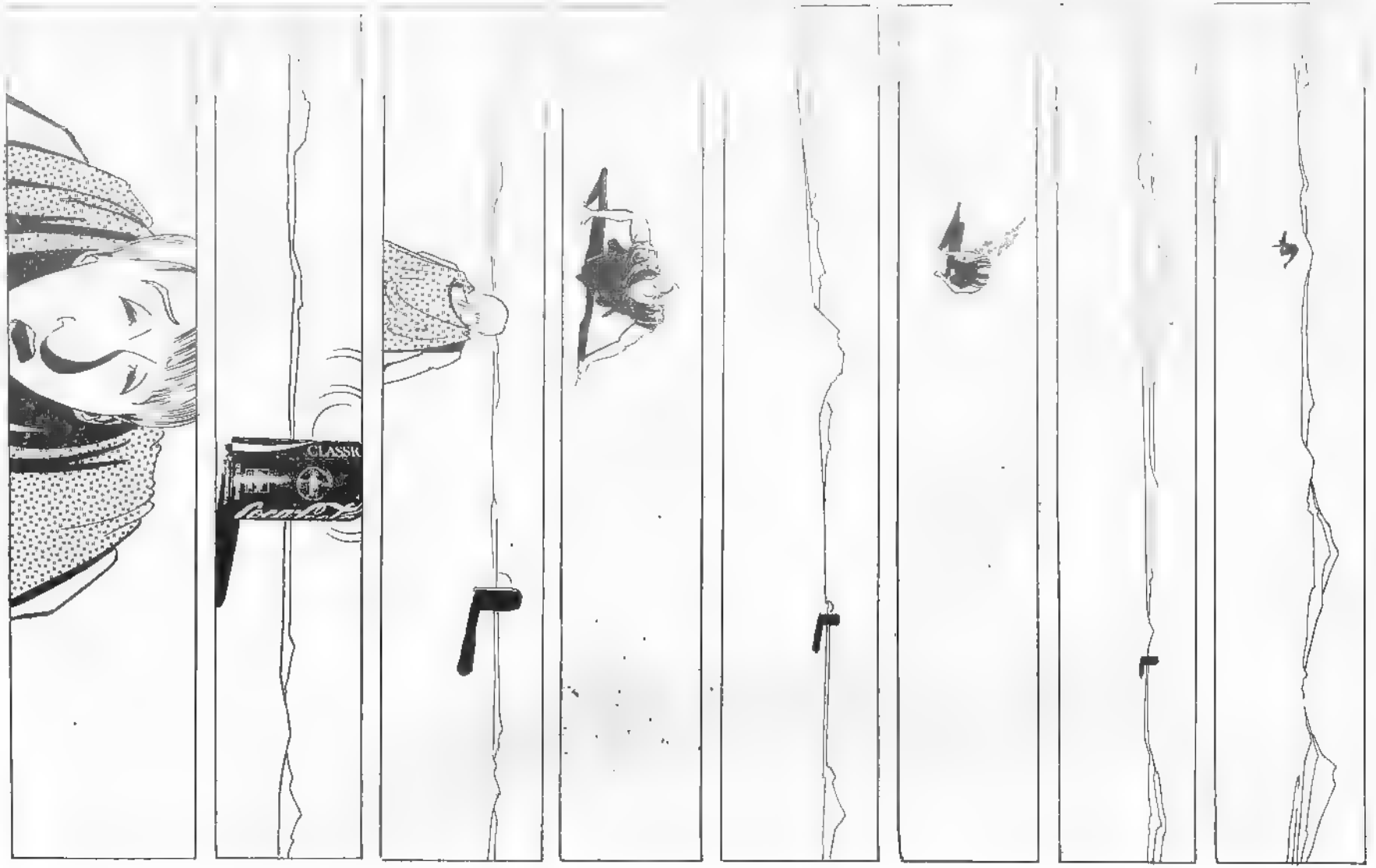
The Triumph of Hunger
5/6
1-14-94

The Tarnmph of Hunger
Pamela Pope 6/6/93
→ 6/6

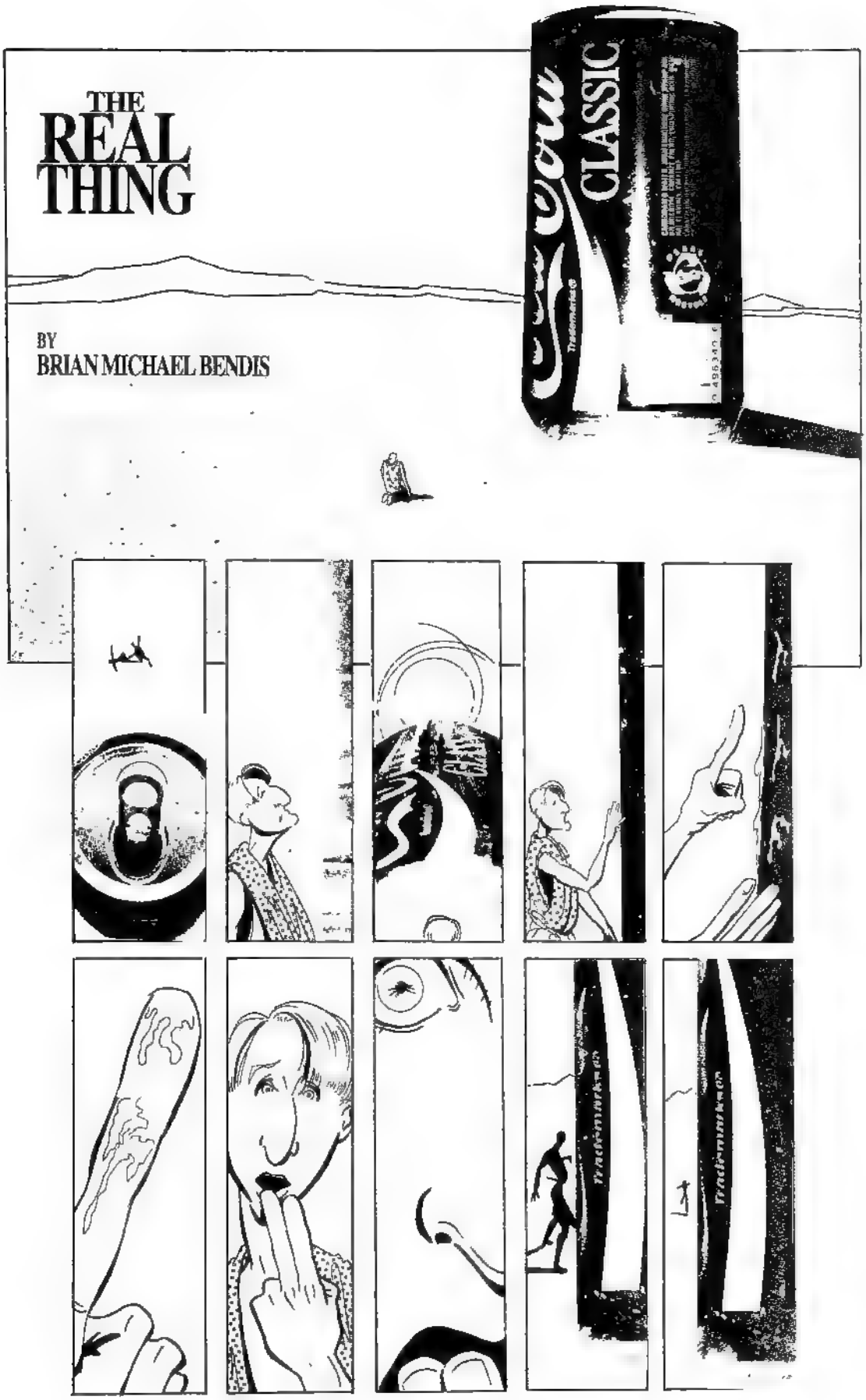
WORDS BY DOUG M. WHEELER
IMAGES BY STAN W. SHAW
Classics Desecrated Presents
3 Blind Mice
JUST-US
DA PREZ
CONGRESS
SEN.
REP
3 BLIND MICE..
ENTHOUSE NAKED MAKES NAKED!
PREZ
Pant Pant Pant
THERE'S A HAIR IN MY COKE!
LYNCHING
WATCH 'EM HAVE FUN, WASTE ON THE RUN...
JUST-US
SEX TOYS
BACK DRACES
FEARLESS LEADER
LONG DONG SILVER!
...THE COUNTRY IS FALLING ALL TO SHIT, BUT FROM THEIR ACTIONS OR LACK, YOU WOULDN'T KNOW IT...
MORE
MORE!
MORE!
TAX MONEY

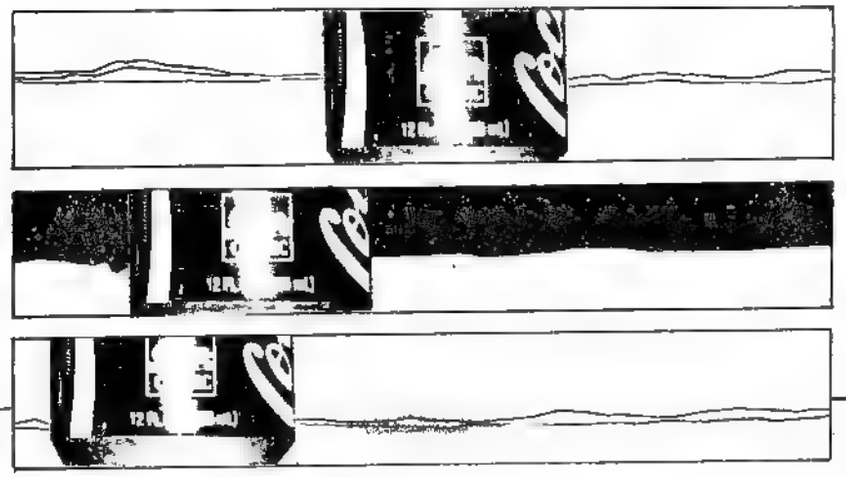
...YET THE VOTERS REACT NOT IN THE LEAST BIT...
APATHY
VOTE!
BUDWEISER SPONSOR
DRY CLEANERS
T.V.
VOTER
SCANDAL-DIAPERS
"KEEPS THE SHIT IN!"
Re-Elect the same CROOKS!
IT'S EASY!
SCUM
GENERAL DYNAMICS
EMPTY PROMISES
JINGO JUICE
MEDIA HYPE
BUY AMERICA
FOR SALE BY OWNER
Wah! Wah! Wah!
VOTER
DIAPER-GATE
"FOR WHEN THE SHIT HITS THE FAN!"
SINNER
PREZ
GIN
BOURBON
HONOR
HATE
ADS
GREED
4 BLIND MICE!
SOUND BITE.
SHAW'94


CLASSR

THE REAL THING

BY
BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS

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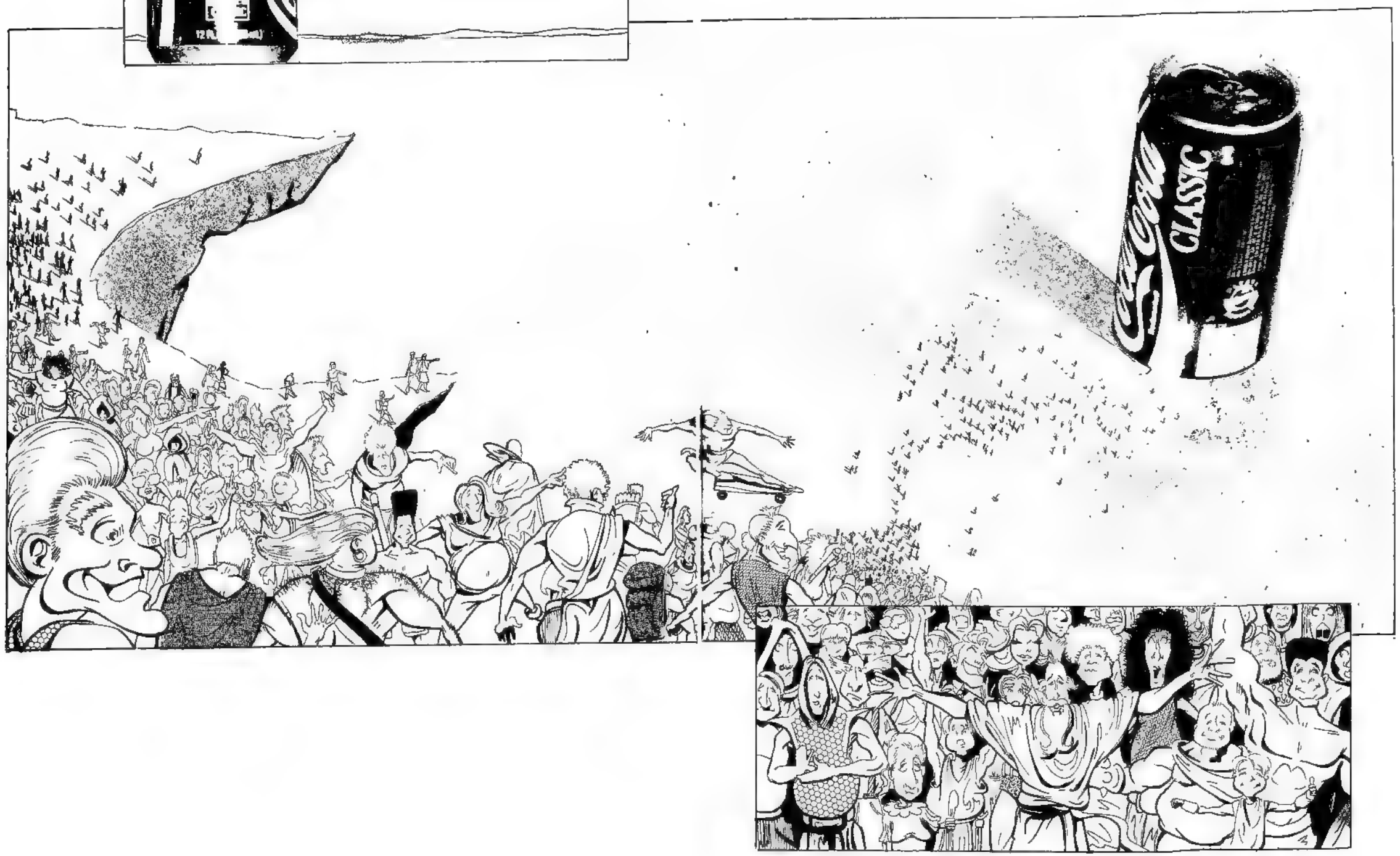
Coca-Cola
Coca-Cola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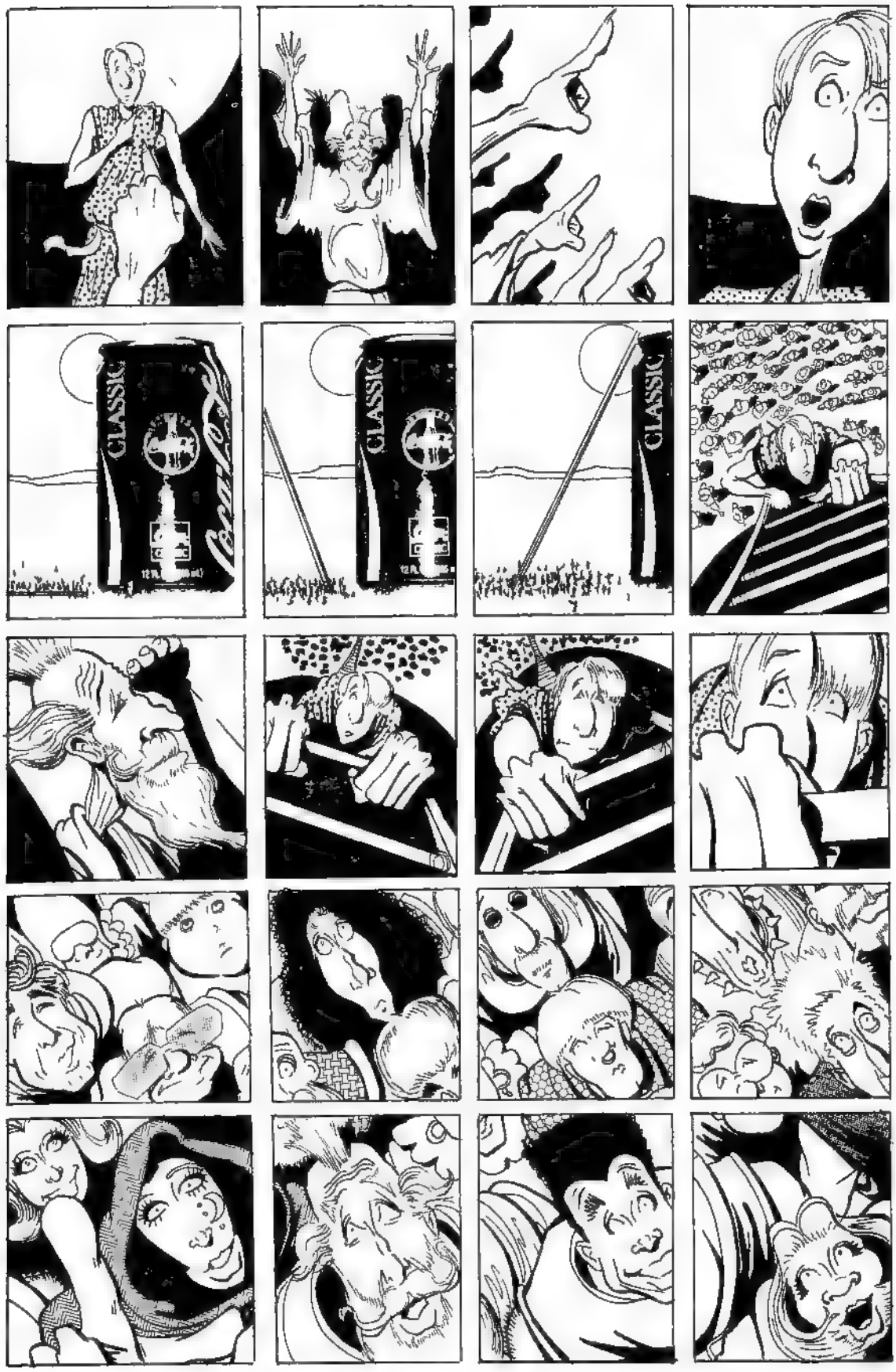
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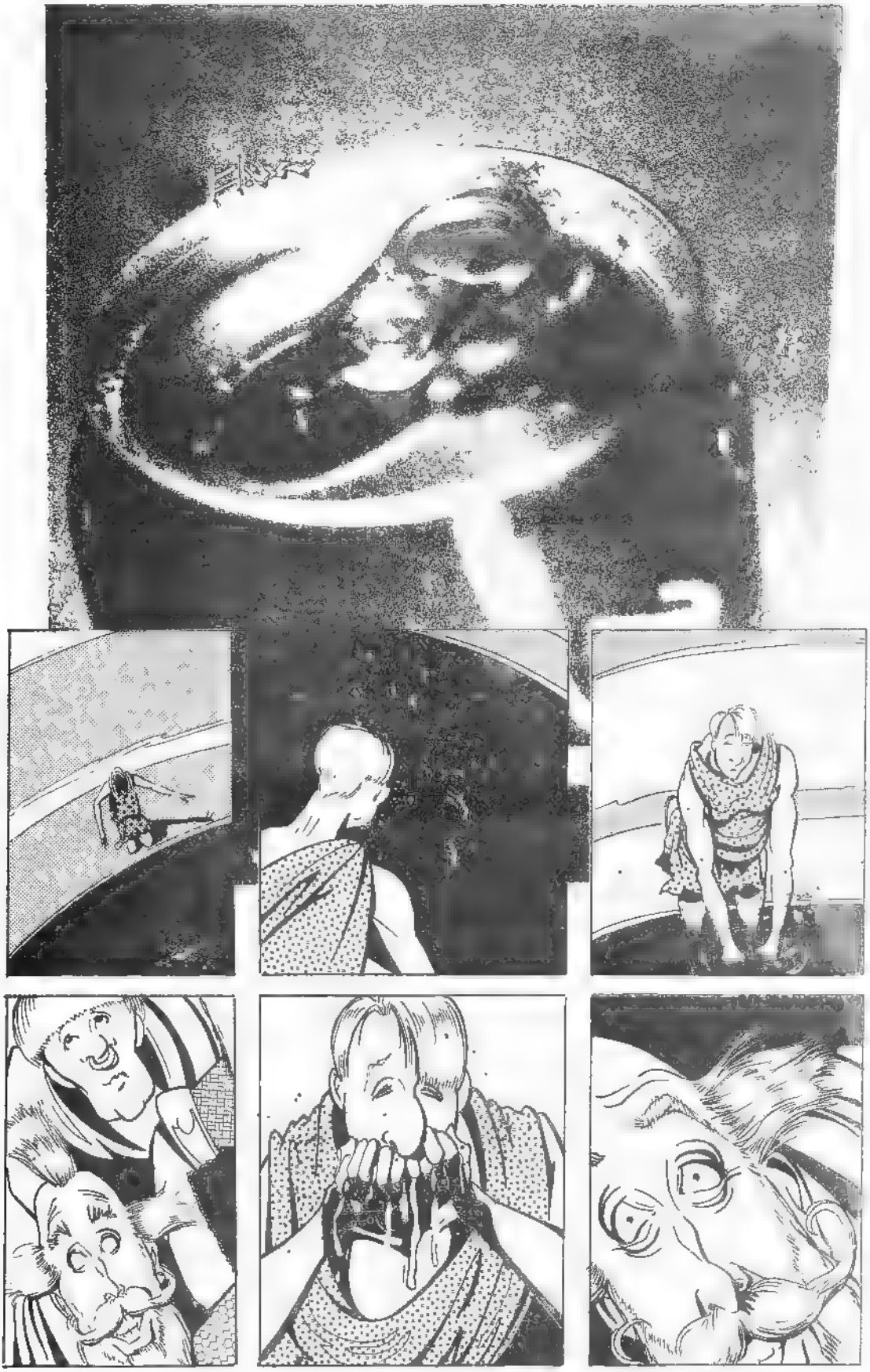
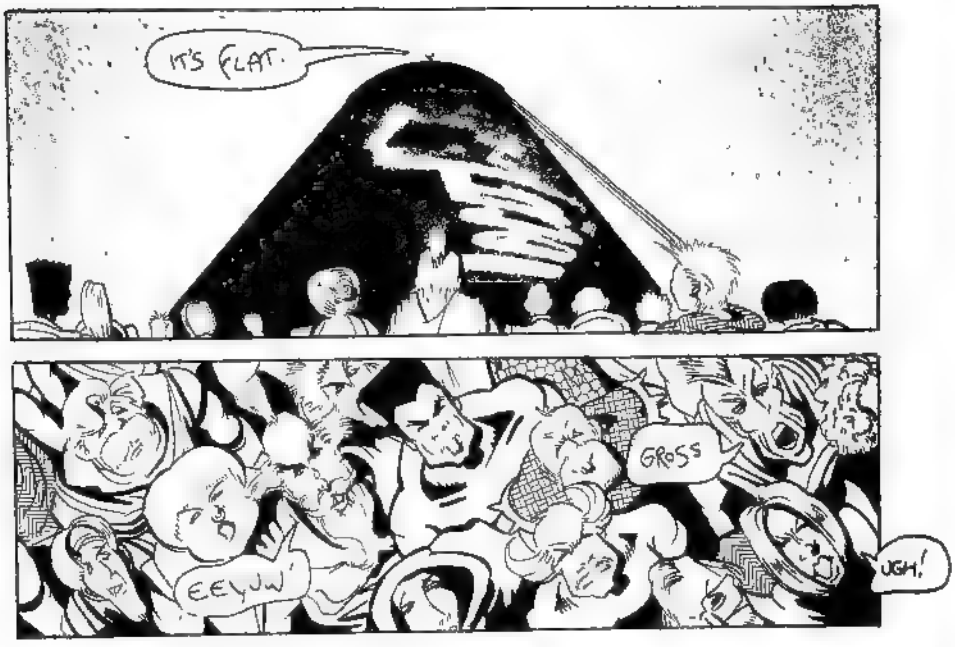



IT'S FLAT.
EEYUW
GROSS
UGH!

The Calculus Test
a true story
SCRIPT -- EDWARD MARTIN III
PENCILS -- CASEY JONES
INKS -- JEFF PARKER &
CRAIG GILMORE
HI, ANDY!
HEY
ANDY, DON'T YOU HAVE A TEST AT FOUR?
GEEZ!

SORRY I'M LATE, MR. DIMITROFF. DID I MAKE IT IN TIME?
NORMALLY, YOU'RE PROMPT, ANDY, SO I'LL LET IT GO THIS TIME. GO SIT OVER THERE, NEXT TO TRACY.
THANKS!

ONLY FIFTEEN MINUTES LATE. NO PROBLEM!
OH, NO!
Bradley
STATISTICS
END

Kyle Garrett
writer

the BODY SNATCHERS

Nathan Pride
illustrator

They're coming again. I can Hear them. No...I don't really hear them, it's more like I can sense them. How? Is it vibrations? Are they somehow pushing the molecules of the air towards me as they approach? Molecules of pain racing towards me...like white blood cells converging on a foreign substance. For when they come, so does the pain.

I lay here, absorbed in a silent world with only my body's sounds intruding. I hear the rhythmatic pulsations of my heart as it surges blood in an endless intricate circle. The dried mucus in my lung weakly pushes out the stale air, gives a rasping sound...like a scraping of dries bone. The peristalsis of my intestines quiver as the churning food initiates involuntary contractions and the internal biological noises of chemical breakdown send out an odd assortment of sounds. The coolness from the constant drip of the IV deludes my senses. I know I don't really hear each drop but I can predict it. I have assigned a sound to it anyway.

I peer out of my one cloudy eye. I see their shadows scurrying around in my world of grey. Monochromatic tones of black and white except for red. Red blood. Always the blood. I don't remember exactly when I lost the color of the world. I have lost so much including time.

Blood. I have lost a lot of blood. No...I didn't lose it... it was taken from me. I became a living blood bank. All of us in the ward were. We used to laugh about it. Locked up to keep us out of society yet our blood flowed through so many veins of those we were hidden away from. But the laughter stopped when the experiments began.

The shadows cast over me. I don't try to speak...I never try anymore. The attempt only saddens me. I wait for them to turn the audio switch, the switch which allows me to join their world even if only partially. But there is no dull metallic ringing in my ears, no static hum whispering to my brain. It looks like the switch won't be turned on today. Again.

I sense one of them bumping into the bed as they pick up the chart to read it. I know what the chart says. It lists my name, my identification number, and my crime as well as the subsequent sentence. At least I knew what it said years ago...so many years ago.

Dr. Imir Rankin looked at the chart. He glanced at the picture of the smiling blond with perfect white teeth captured alluringly by parted pale lips. Ocean blue eyes graced with long lashes, surrounded by a golden tan. A beach girl he surmised. His eyes peered from the chart to take a sad look at the old woman on the bed before him. The teeth were still perfect but no longer hers. The cinnamon skin had turned ashen gray etched with sagging crevices. The hair was shockingly white and brittle amid patches of crusty red patches. One eye moved anxiously as if to lock on a target while the space were the other one was a mangled depression laced with fiberous scar tissue.

But prisoner #11719 was still special. She had been the first. The doctors were surprised at her resiliency. Her determination hardened with her scars. She was sometimes referred to as the old maid of the farm. The farm. An innocent term hiding the sterile names that had lined this ward since its inception. It seemed every warden renamed the ward in a feeble attempt to hide what went on behind the double set of swinging doors. But all those who stayed from administration to administration called it the farm. It was the only name that was true.

Rankin reached out to the gnarled skin and touched it softly.

He didn't want to do this!

I feel a gentle stroking of my cheek. I can tell it is a touch of compassion but without pity. I try to acknowledge my thanks...my receipt of their respect but I no longer control my body. My mind is all that I have now and even that betrays me sometimes.

I have no past. Only scattered images that flicker in and out like a candle in a storm. I retreat to my childhood and even though I don't really remember events, only the fleeting scenes that flash before me, I claim them anyways.

A birthday party full of seven year old girls in pretty dresses, clock watching as teachers droned on and on, the terror of my first menstrual cycle. I remember throwing dirt on a box in the ground and wondering if my father blinked when it sprinkled above him. That night in the car with Tim Williamson where the pain surprised me and later with Jimmy Halpin where I learn to ride the masterful strokes.

The images drop randomly on my plate of memories. A wedding where I was the bride but seemed to be nothing but an observer, a honeymoon filled with sand and champagne, eyes that I could look deep into and lose myself but that would later chill me when they turned away with guilt.

Mark. I can't remember his face! All I can remember is his back...sweat meandering down the middle, scratches lining the grooves of his muscles, his shoulder blades

clutched by painted nails...lavendar nails. I remember the nails on the hands...on the feet as they wrapped around his tightened ass. The cloudy vision of the woman screaming with scarlet lips in a perfect O, the flap of Mark's scalp as it bounced against the wall, the heaviness of the gun as it fell out of my hands.

A period of lightness as life was nothing but passive motion, sweeping me to oblivion. Lawyers, judges, and then more lawyers speaking a language all their own and I was nothing more than the ball they played in their on-going game.

I give on trying to guess how many years ago it was when I came. Years were no longer my mile markers of life. Years were for the free.

Thirty one years. Rankin let out a breezy whistle that remained trapped outside of his lips. Thirty one years! That's how long prisoner #11719 had served her sentence. She was the first and now she was the last. She was a harvest for the greater good of civilization. Instead of a death sentence, she was given a life sentence...for others.

Rankin skimmed through her chart. Her "donations" were considerable. A kidney, a lung, half of her liver, a cornea, graphs from her skin, bone marrow...

At first, she had served as a means of life for others...a direct link to survival. But she was moved to a new level. She became nothing more than a giant white rat. Her body served as a breeding ground for new dieases, a culture to dump new and untested drugs into, a victim of science's altruism for society at the expense of the individual.

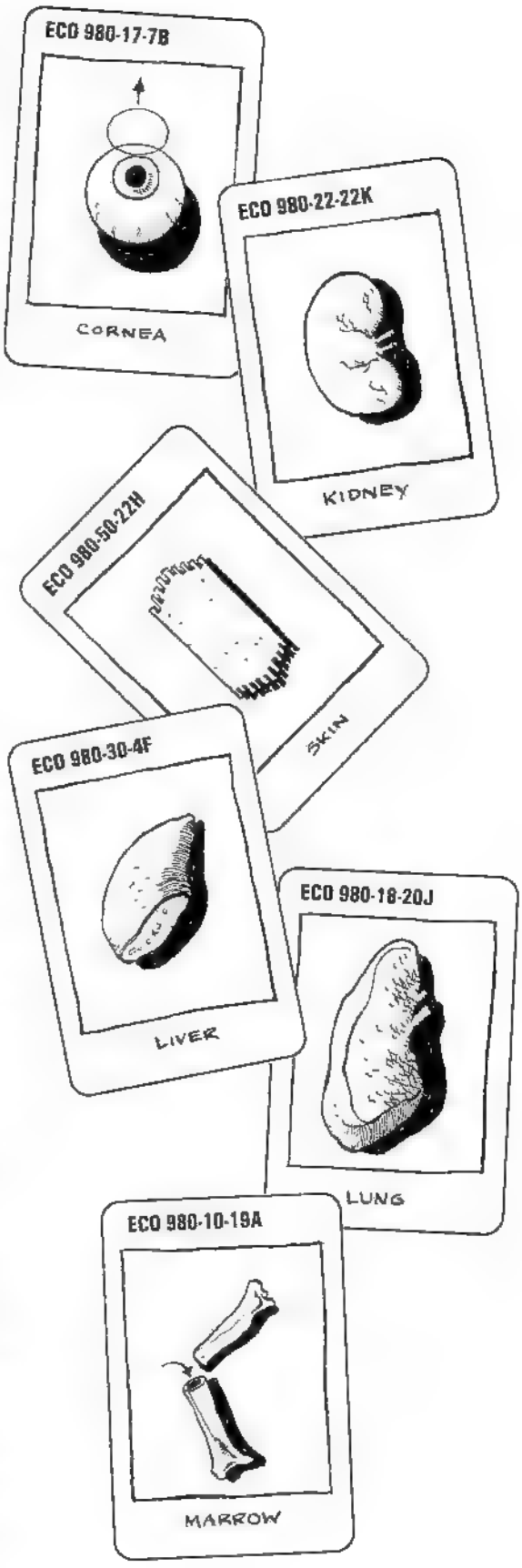
Flipping through the pages, Rankin saw the surgical procedures. Breasts enlarged, breasts reduced. Stomach stapled, stomach unstapled. Plastic surgery to lift sagging skin, silicone to build cheeks and lips...

The weight chart showed a graph that resembled a seismograph. Liquid diets, high fat diet, fruit diet, high protein diet...weight added, weight taken off...

She had suffered through many addictions. Nicotine, LSD, heroin, crack, morphine, and drugs that he didn't recognize. Each one pumped into her to drive her to ecstasy, each one pulled away to watch the symptoms of withdrawal.

Thumbs detached and then reattached and then lost forever when her arms were amputated. Her legs taken and observations made on the burning phantom pain. Ear membranes destroyed to test the power of electrical current in transmitting sound. Switches and relays to replace the mysteries of neurological synapses.

Scars left from surgical procedures, tubes run-



ning in and out of her body... colostomy, tracheotomy, drainage tubes running from her gastro-intestinal region to seep out the biological poison injected in her—

Rankin snapped the chart shut. He didn't want to read anymore.

As he watched the drool slowly ease from her mouth in a continuous stream, he realized that perhaps, just perhaps, what he had to do was the right thing after all.

The presence is still there. He is out of my limited eyesight but it doesn't matter. I can't see faces anyways. Blurry round images that swivel around is all I have seen for a long time.

I try to conjure up faces from my past so that I can give them away. But they all disappear into non-discript silhouettes whose features float incoherently. I close my eye tight to bring an absolute blackness but it is soon disrupted by white stars that flicker... my personal universe that is on the screen on my eyelid.

I think I hear the sound of a baby's cry but I know that is impossible. The sounds come more frequently then they used to, maybe even every day but I don't know one day from the next so I'm not sure.

Of everything they did to me, that was the worst. I can almost laugh when I think of the first time. How could I not know?

Strapped into the bed, tested constantly. I thought that somehow I had a disease but when it finally dawned on me what kind of tests they were, I was stunned.

I was pregnant.

The bastards used me as a surrogate mother. They implanted sperm in me to create life because I had taken mine.

I had nine children. I never saw any of them, they were taken away as soon as they left my body. Perhaps they thought that I wouldn't have any attachment to them if I never saw them...perhaps they just didn't care. But a mother always has attachments. The first wail from the treasure grown in your womb is more of a bond then science or psychiatry can ever fully understand.

I never even knew what sex they were but I heard that the first one was a boy. In my mind, they all were boys. Boys had a better chance of survival in the world without feeling the pain that girls must go through. I could identify with the girls too much but the boys, they could adjust better. I wished that I could have seen at least one of them so that I could give them all a memory. My own children and they have no face!

I started to name them after the angels. Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Urile...but then I couldn't remember any more of them, so I went with the Gospel. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The ninth one was Paul. I figured that I would name the next four after the Beatles, not realizing that there would only be one more. Of course, I realized that there would be two Johns but that was okay. John was my father's name...I think.

Rankin sighed. He casually rubbed his face and reflected that he should've shaved this morning. God, he wished he could go out and have a cigarette. But he had quit some ten years ago.

He was stalling. He knew that.

Why him, he wondered. Appointed by the court. He knew he could back out of it. Moral grounds...religious beliefs...he knew he could come up with a dozen reasons. But it wouldn't look good on his record. And for #11719, it didn't matter who it was. It didn't matter to anyone.

Except for Petersen.

Charles M. Petersen. A two bit lawyer who got a bug up his ass about the treatment of prisoners. Prisoners have rights too was his motto. For twelve years, Petersen had petitioned the courts against the cruel and unusual treatment that was dispensed in the farm. No one else cared! Not the ACLU, not the public, not the system. Oh, sure they cared enough to ease their conscious with mild protest but deep down, down in that level where truth can't be denied, no one really cared.

Except for Petersen.

It became a vendetta for Petersen. No one knew why, but he managed to finally bring it to everyone's attention including the Supreme Court. Suddenly, the public cared too. After all, how could you condone it? The typical peer pressure as everyone clamored to ride the train of righteousness. Now they all stood behind him as he was chosen to be their custodian of morality.

Rankin flipped the switch and the red light above the masking tape labeled audio blinked on. She deserves to know. He felt she was owed at least that much.

The screech races into my head and throws my head back in an involuntary arch. A gurgling noise invades my world...I have sound, I hear noise...but it is indistinguishable. I still welcome it. It takes me out of the depths...

Rankin leaned over and kissed her on the forehead.

I see a shadow blocking the light. I feel a slight wetness on my head. Now, the shadow pulls back.

Rankin stood at the side of the bed and looked down. He lifted the cover on the electrical plate and placed his finer on the power switch.

"I'm sorry."

What was that? Someone said something. Did they call out my name? Did they call out...out...

Oh my God! I don't even remember my name anymore!

Rankin turned his head as his finger pushed the switch to the off position.

Please...not that. Don't take that away from me. Leave me something...please! My name...me...it's all I have left...don't take that away from me!

Rankin watched the bevels of the oxygen cylinder push out one last gasp.

You've taken everything else! All I've been through...I can survive all that...I can survive anything, just leave me that much...please....

...the green blip on the monitor jumped fast....

Tell me...tell me my name...that's all I need...

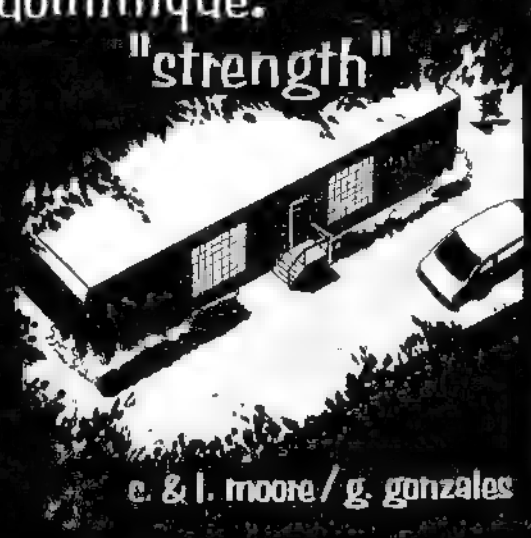
...then slow...before pushing straight...

Please...I...

Rankin pulled the white sheet over her head. He hesitated for a second. He smiled. It was finally over for her and he saw a tear had pooled in the recess of her eye. He turned away and nodded slightly to himself. Yes, he had done good.

the Astute CRitic
by p. Hester
:tsk:
adrift inna sea of morons!
too popular!
too hip!
too Dumb!
BLAM!
BAM!
too vacant!
POW!
too pretty!
too banal!
too Artsy!
too old!
too serious!
too too!
too smart!
PKOW!
too fun!
too close!
BAM BAM BAM
too political!
too much joy!
:PHOO: 'nother day, another...
...nother...
...
HEH!
HURR!
:KAPUT:

dominique: "strength"



c. & l. moore / g. gonzales

WORKIN' FOR THEM MURDERIN' FONTAINES!
NEWS TO ME. ALL I KNEW WAS, I PLAYED W TH THEIR K DS. THEY WERE MY FRIENDS
Smk
THAT DIDN'T HURT! DADDY WAS RIGHT YOU ARE A WEAK OLD WOMAN!
NIKKI, GET BACK HERE!
I RAN AWAY CRYING.
JUST AS I GOT TO THE DOOR.
HE WAS WILD AND SCRUFFY... AND CUTE. LIKE THE FONTAINE BOYS. HIS BREATH LIKE MOLDY GRAPES
HEY THERE. YOUR DADDY HOME?
NIKKI-! WE'LL BE LATE FOR..CHURCH...OH.
YOU CLETE'S MAMA?
IN-LAW
GRANNY WAS ALWAYS SWEET TO PEOPLE. EXCEPT MAMA AND DADDY'S FRIENDS. (SHE COULD ALWAYS TELL..)
HE OWES ME MONEY
SO ASK HIM FOR IT. HE AIN'T HERE.

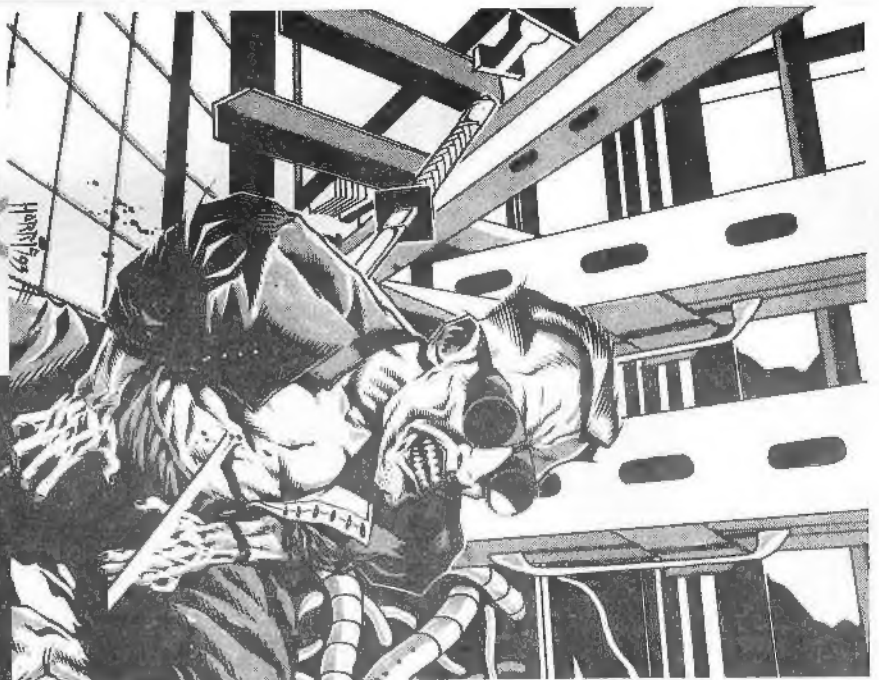
LOOK, WOMAN, I JUST WANNA GET PAID.
SORRY BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO LEAVE WE'RE LATE FOR CHURCH.
I SAID-- I'M GONNA GET PAID
ONE WAY OR THE OTHER!
HEH MAYBE ME AND CLETE'S GIRL HERE'LL GO OUT FOR ICE CREAM TILL HE DECIDES TO SHOW UP
SUDDENLY GRANNY GRABBED AN OLD BIBLE FROM THE SHELF MADE ME EVEN MADDER
I'D JUST BOUGHT HER A NEW ONE FOR MOTHERS DAY
GET OUT
3

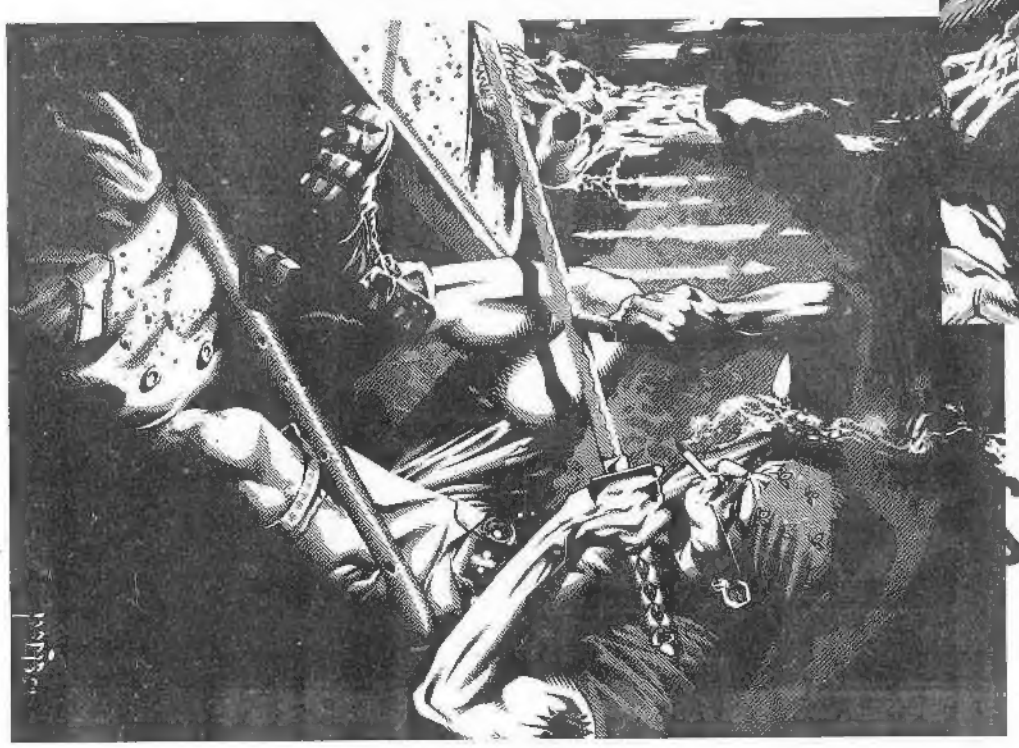
THEIR STARES LOCKED. HIS EYES SMILING. INVULNERABLE
BUT IN HERS--AN ODD PEACE -THE EYE OF A STORM.
:KLK:
SHE WOULD'VE PULLED THE TRIGGER- EVEN THINK SHE WANTED TO- BUT IT WASN'T NECESSARY
TELL CLETE, DOCKEY CAME BY.
SHE MADE SURE HE DROVE AWAY. GOT HIS TAG NUMBER.
YOU... OKAY, BABY?
YES MA'AM! :SNIFF: I'M SORRY
ME, TOO N KKI
SHE HELD ME SHAKING BUT WITH A STRENGTH I NEVER KNEW SHE HAD
A HOLD THAT WOULD NEVER LET GO
FREEZE.

Henry

S

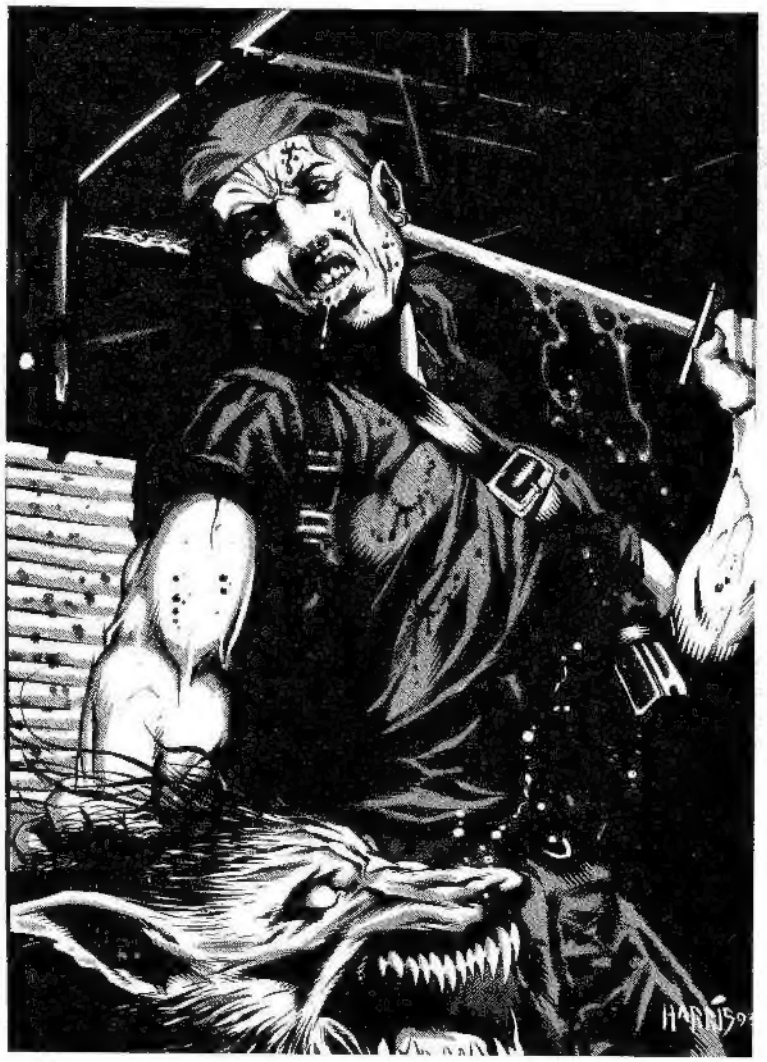
Sketchb





Sketchbook

TONY IS PRESENTLY BUSY AT WORK ON HIS NEW MONTHLY SERIES, STARMAN, COMING THIS AUGUST FROM DC COMICS, SCRIPTED BY GOLDEN AGE AND WITCHCRAFT WRITER JAMES ROBINSON. BE SURE TO CHECK IT OUT.



Sean Elliott
271 Dartmouth St. 1G
Boston, MA 02116

I just finished NEGATIVE BURN #9 and I feel it's the best anthology comic on the stands today. I've been with you since #1, and it's a consistently good read.

After finishing ARREST REPORT (my favorite story in the issue), I wanted to write you with an idea/request. I love crime stories and comics are my favorite medium so you can see that I'm more than a little frustrated by the lack of a monthly crime comic. I have a great respect for EC's crime reprint book, but it's really not contemporary enough. I loved Dark Horse's HOMICIDE and HARD LOOKS, but they're gone and the only "fix" I get is the occasional ARREST REPORT or LASTING IMPRESSIONS (DHP #83, David Lloyd).

Considering the success of EC's "theme" anthology's (WEIRD SCIENCE, CRIME SUSPENSE STORIES, HAUNT OF FEAR, etc.), why don't you do monthly theme books on a couple of genres as an experiment? You could do a crime book, a surreal book (BLACK MIST, A LABOR-type stories), a book of shorts (MR. MAMOULIAN, ALAN MOORE'S SONGBOOK, CLASSICS DESECRATED, etc.). All these books would target a certain audience.

In my opinion, people shy from anthologies due to the hit or miss format of the book—for $2.95, readers want to know what they're getting. This is unfortunate, because NEGATIVE BURN is a delight and I talk it up all the time in the comics shop I frequent.

The reason I'm writing to you as opposed to DC, Dark Horse, or other publishers is that I seriously believe you're trying to give readers an alternative in comics. Also, you obviously have excellent connections in the business to get the Hesters, Moores, Bollands, Russells, etc. to produce work for you. Most importantly, you don't have to sell 50,000 copies to consider a book successful.

I'm a manufacturer's rep. in the shoe business and I always tell product development to give me product that retailers can't get from other manufacturers. In other words, hit it where they ain't. Due to the success of TV shows like Cops, America's Most Wanted, etc., I feel there's a big audience for crime comics. Please consider it.

I would love nothing more than doing all kinds of anthologies like you suggest, but the reality is that there isn't much of a chance out there in today's shrinking market for these kinds of comics to exist. That's one reason I try to give the reader such a wide assortment of material in each issue of NEGATIVE BURN.

If you like crime fiction then be sure to check out Charles and Lisa Moore's DOMINIQUE specials starting this July from Caliber.

Larry Stark
117B Thorndike St.
Brookline, MA 02146

This has been a peculiar weekend for me. In a sense, a couple of days free of work were a bit of a preview for retirement, which will begin on the fifth day of August. But I spent it wallowing in Caliber publications, crying a lot, and in general feeling myself unravel. Since you're an editor, I think you can relate to a bit to what I have to say, before I try to thank you for KILROY IS HERE #0.

I guess I really lost it somewhere in the middle of reading the two issues of HAPPY THE CLOWN. There is in this book an onrushing cataract of ideas and images and resonances to history and to my personal life (A Special Olympics championship swimmer is a messenger delivering to the architects where I work as a security guard). I don't know whether these have even been published yet, but I haven't seen them in any of the comic shops I haunt, and I worry that maybe, once again, shop-owners and readers have deprived themselves, and me as a buyer, of a magnificent reading experience. I say that because I noticed that PETIT MAL and SEPULCHER OPUS are copyrighted '92 and '93, which means I was never given a chance to see them by local shop-owners.

I guess what I mean is I find myself sitting here, tears streaming down into my beard, wanting to run down the street buttonholing passersby and shouting, "Hey, did you ever expect that a mere comic-book could ever be this good???" I've looked up from pages of NEGATIVE BURN thinking, "I can't be the only person in America who knows how good a thing this is." But then I drop in to my local shop, and the comic-seller there tries to be polite while he explains that black-and-whites don't sell as well as "we" might like. Well, not NEGATIVE BURN, which has been picked up by every Boston shop I've been in, but most other Caliber books. The audience it seems just isn't there for quality over color, damnit.

I didn't mean to dump on you like this. But you and Gary, at least, get to say "Yes!" to creative people with genius in their hands—even if it means "dropping rose petals over the edge of the Grand Canyon and waiting for an echo." I mean, I know how hard it must be to "do a full-page a day" in Dave Sim's rubic and then to hear back the overwhelming roar of applause that must have greeted the appearance of SEPULCHER OPUS! Shit, you people deserve better than you get!

But enough about me...

The KILROY #0 hit pretty hard, too. I still have no idea what shape the continuing book may take, but all these "Intro's" allude to an "empathy quotient" in you that staggers my imagining. In a sense (I'm being The Critic here, ignore me) you're pushing Stan Lee's formula to the ultimate, thinking up a "superhero" who is all human and not super at all. The idea of an entity with a "Spider-sense" for inhumanity and yet no spider-powers to thwart it really boggles my mind. I'm going to put a couple of reviews into circulation, but all I can really do I think is quote Paul Chadwick. Not only did he groove on your stuff, but he knows more than I do what it takes to create so many pages.

All I can promise you is that there is one pair of eyeballs out here devouring everything you do. And if you happen to run in to any of the HIGH CALIBER young turks I've talked to, tell them The Old Fart in Boston has his eye on you all. Some day, I'll maybe get the Great Eastern people to sponsor a black-and-white convention here in Boston, and you can all take me to dinner and draw portraits of my soul.

Just let me know when you can get that Boston convention going, Larry. I love Boston and am just dying for a reason to come back. I hope I get to do the first sketch.

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